

BOOKS IN BRIEF

100 Essential Modern Poems, selected and introduced by Joseph Parisi.
Ivan R. Dee, 320 pages, \$24.95

As editor for two decades of Chicago's venerable *Poetry* magazine, Joseph Parisi spent his working hours looking for the best of contemporary poetry. His knowledge and judgment are put to good use in *100 Essential Modern Poems*, intended as a kind of *vade mecum*, a "go with me" guide to make it easier to approach the vast poetry shelves in your favorite bookstore.

The poems collected here are modern both chronologically and in the broad sense that, in Parisi's judgment, their language, ideas, forms, and sensibilities "express the spirit of modern times." They are the work of 80 poets, born between 1865 and 1952, all writing in English, about two-thirds of them American (all but a handful from east of the Mississippi). Yeats, Frost, Eliot, Auden, and Heaney are represented along with a few dozen other famous names; but there are also a couple of dozen poets whose names will not be known, or will be only vaguely known, to the educated general reader.

Parisi provides an engaging sketch of each poet's life and work. These sketches give a local habitation to the names, make informed connections among the poets and between the poems and the literary developments of their times, and include suggestions for further reading.

—Christopher Flannery



A Gift of Freedom: How the John M. Olin Foundation Changed America, by John J. Miller.
Encounter Books, 232 pages, \$25.95

The most magnificent acts of philanthropy in the United States have often reflected an old-world sense of *noblesse oblige* but with a public-spirited American twist—the Medicis as channeled by Ben Franklin, perhaps. Thus the great charitable bequests of the first-generation Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Mellons did not primarily fund art for art's sake (much less for a dynasty's sake) but endowed education, culture, and public works as means of civic self-improvement.

But what if "higher culture" and education no longer refine and uplift? And what if property rights and free enterprise, which alone can create great and widespread wealth, come under attack? In the late 1970s, this was the situation

that confronted John M. Olin, a stout and principled capitalist, who had accumulated a fortune in the ammunition business. His solution—his wonderful, highly effective solution—was the John M. Olin Foundation.

With sympathy and insight, *National Review's* John Miller tells the story of how Olin transformed his small, private foundation into a major force for shaping America's cultural and intellectual landscape. After enlarging the foundation with additional cash, Olin hired a politically savvy staff to seek out and finance a "counter intelligentsia," intended to oppose the liberal elites who had ascended in the 1960s and '70s. By 2005, when it spent itself out of existence in accord with Mr. Olin's wishes, the foundation had disbursed some \$370 million in support of conservative ideas and institutions. That's about the annual budget of Wichita—spread over more than two decades, no less. But what "a bang for the buck," to use a favorite phrase of the foundation's long-time chairman, William E. Simon.

The foundation's many beneficiaries (including the Claremont Institute) remember Olin's legacy with gratitude, and hope this book will help inspire a new generation of conservative philanthropists.

—Elihu Grant
Washington, D.C.



The Rights of War and Peace, by Hugo Grotius,
edited by Richard Tuck.
Liberty Fund, 1,350 pages, \$60 (cloth), \$36 (paper)

As a political theorist, Hugo Grotius is especially interesting for his attempt to develop a natural-law alternative to the Thomistic natural law while at the same time resisting the modern doctrine of his younger contemporary, Thomas Hobbes. Liberty Fund has now republished in three volumes Grotius's masterwork of natural and international law, *The Rights of War and Peace* (1625). This edition is a double treat, for it is a reprint of the anonymous English translation (1738) of Jean Barbeyrac's French edition (1724). The latter includes a set of notes that have come to hold nearly as much interest as Grotius's text. Since the book is so learned—some might say inclined to name-dropping—Barbeyrac's notes are especially useful. But more than editorial comments, the notes also contain a running conversation, often debate, between

Barbeyrac and Grotius. Barbeyrac, too, was extremely learned, and he brought to bear arguments from other natural-law writers, including later ones like Samuel Pufendorf. Richard Tuck of Harvard, one of the world's leading Grotius scholars, provides a brief introduction, supplying helpful context for the reader. As with all Liberty Fund editions, this is a beautiful set, selling at a generously affordable price.

—Michael Zuckert
University of Notre Dame



Politics: A Very Short Introduction,
by Kenneth Minogue.
Oxford University Press, 128 pages, \$9.95 (paper)

Both the beginner in politics and the connoisseur will benefit from Kenneth Minogue's lively contribution to the "Very Short Introduction" series published by Oxford University Press. Minogue, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the London School of Economics, presents an engaging combination of the magisterial and the argumentative. His 13 chapters, each the length of a Saki short story, provide a historical review covering Greece, Rome, medieval Christendom, and the modern state in both its internal and international relations; an account of the practice of politics, with its characteristic interplay of parties and interests, doctrines and ideals, particular and general concerns; and a sometimes bemused, sometimes scathing discussion of attempts in the past three centuries to marry knowledge and politics, whether through modern political science, on the one hand, or ideology, on the other.

Uniting Minogue's presentation is a thoroughly classical contrast between politics and despotism. In the former, citizens shape the conditions of their own association through public deliberation and debate; in despotism, the terms of government are handed down. "Politics is endless public disagreement about what justice requires," writes Minogue. Where disagreement is suppressed, or where its elimination is desired, the result is quasi-despotic. His argument, he concludes, is "likely to provoke disagreement, perhaps even a bit of outrage. And if it does do that it will have succeeded in illustrating one more aspect of the many-sided thing we have been studying."

—Josiah Lee Auspitz
Michael Oakeshott Association



Opera: The Basics, by Denise Gallo.
Routledge, 224 pages, \$75 (cloth), \$16.95 (paper)

This short little book outweighs much of the competition. Written by a senior music specialist at the Library of Congress, Denise Gallo's *Opera: The Basics* is a cross between an opera dictionary and an encyclopedia. It defines basic terms but adds fascinating history and rich context.

This is not opera for "dummies." For instance, a page in the libretto section is devoted to "A Brief Word About German Versification." While the beginner will not be intimidated, even opera veterans will learn from it. One can dip into this volume almost anywhere and find something entertaining and instructive. I had no idea that Mozart's famous librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte, filched most of the text for *Don Giovanni* from other sources. Or that one reason the pit was created for the opera orchestra was that patrons in the front row complained that the double basses obstructed their view.

Gallo's evident depth of learning is combined with an affection that gives the book the sense of having been written from inside the world of opera rather than by an outside observer of it. *Dulce et utile*.

—Robert R. Reilly
Vienna, VA



Right Turn: John T. Flynn and the Transformation of American Liberalism, by John E. Moser.
New York University Press, 277 pages, \$45

In this much-needed and well-researched biography, Ashland University history professor John Moser traces the long, strange career of an American journalist prominent from the 1930s to the 1950s. John T. Flynn's ability to convey complex economic issues in winning prose made him an influential voice at the onset of the Great Depression, which he blamed on corrupt, unregulated Wall Street financiers.

Initially a supporter of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, Flynn later wrote two books attacking the president. He thought Roosevelt incapable of grappling with the Depression and prone, as Moser recounts, to "save his presidency by promoting war hysteria." Flynn became a founding member of America First, though he did everything he could to distance the organization from Nazi defenders and Communists. By the 1950s, he embraced Senator Joseph McCarthy, whom he thought deserved "the whole-

hearted support of every loyal American." Flynn eventually became a pariah on both the Left and the Right, and today he is remembered only by groups like the John Birch Society.

Moser argues that throughout it all, the irascible journalist remained—as he himself always claimed—a political liberal. Yet Flynn was not a classical liberal; he rejected free-market capitalism and favored business regulation. Nor was he a modern liberal; he opposed both the New Deal and the Fair Deal. If anything, Flynn was closer to the old progressives like Gerald Nye, Burton Wheeler, Gifford Pinchot, and Hiram Johnson, self-proclaimed advocates of the people against the interests. If these men had been active public figures following World War II, they may have made a "right turn" similar to Flynn's.

—Gregory L. Schneider
Emporia State University



Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, by Jonathan Marks.
Cambridge University Press, 200 pages, \$65

Rousseau is notorious for elaborating two apparently contradictory accounts of human well-being: primitive, natural man (misnamed the noble savage) and the citizen (who is totally socialized or "denatured"). Most readers find both extremes impossible and undesirable. In his carefully argued book, Jonathan Marks suggests that Rousseau agrees.

Marks, a Carthage College professor of political science and philosophy, argues that what is best by nature for man according to Rousseau is a kind of balance of contradictory elements that is more productive of happiness than the bourgeois' conflicted existence—a "natural perfection of a naturally disharmonious being." He elaborates several such possibilities. In his *Discourses*, Rousseau calls the state of savage society, which has already developed far from the original state of nature, "the best state for mankind." In the *Émile*, an imaginary account of the best possible education for an ordinary man, he combines in a different way elements of individuality and independence with preparation for compassionate, dutiful participation in social life. And in *The Social Contract*, the citizens of a legitimate modern republic would likewise exemplify a balance of opposites, enjoying individual rights and spheres of activity alongside their dedication to the general will. In short, the perfection of man involves

not impossible unity but happy balance.

This assessment is thorough and exceptionally fair-minded in its discussion of other interpreters of Rousseau. Marks recovers an analysis of liberalism's problems that is more radical and yet more balanced than modern communitarian approaches. He shows that Rousseau's rhetorical extremism, being in the service of moderation, is no political vice.

—James H. Nichols, Jr.
Claremont McKenna College



Bertrand de Jouvenel: The Conservative Liberal and the Illusions of Modernity, by Daniel J. Mahoney.
ISI Books, 232 pages, \$25 (cloth), \$15 (paper)

For Daniel Mahoney, author of two celebrated works on Raymond Aron and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Bertrand de Jouvenel is one of the greatest though most underappreciated political philosophers of the 20th century—a thinker in the mold, if not quite at the rank, of Alexis de Tocqueville.

Jouvenel was concerned with the danger of state power (and hence often miscast as a libertarian), but also with the need to develop conscious public and private strategies to form better citizens and to protect the natural environment. His political thought aimed in no small part at dispelling "the illusions of modernity," though without ever abandoning belief in founding a moderate and rational political science that could improve liberal democracy. The core of Jouvenel's work, according to Mahoney, is found in three "masterworks of political philosophy" written between 1945 and 1963: *On Power* (the best known of Jouvenel's books), *Sovereignty* (the most profound), and *The Pure Theory of Politics* (the most provocative).

Mahoney candidly explores Jouvenel's life—including his dalliances before World War II with both the far Left and the far Right, and his awkward efforts after 1968 to ingratiate himself again with the Left. Mahoney concludes that Jouvenel's thought deserves to be distinguished from his weaknesses, though not fatal flaws, of character: "The sympathetic student of Jouvenel is torn between profound admiration for the wise and humane political philosopher and unavoidable discomfort with the poor practical judgment he regularly displayed in the opening and closing periods of his intellectual career."

—James W. Ceaser
University of Virginia